

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will read the joint resolution by title for the second time.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A joint resolution (S.J. Res. 29) to authorize the use of United States Armed Forces against the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant and its associated forces.

Mr. MCCONNELL. In order to place the joint resolution on the calendar under the provisions of rule XIV, I object to further proceedings.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection having been heard, the joint resolution will be placed on the calendar.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic leader is recognized.

CLEAN WATER RULE

Mr. REID. Mr. President, we are 3 weeks into the new year, and already we are back to wasting the Senate's time to launch partisan attacks. Today my Republican colleagues have chosen to once again attack clean water protections that millions of Americans depend on.

On Tuesday President Obama vetoed the Republican attempt to roll back the clean water rule—a rule that basically restores important safeguards to shield our water sources from pollution and contamination. There are special interest groups who have tried to raise money based on this. Some of the groups who have tried to raise money on this with fallacious information are farm groups. They have gone out and said that this is terrible for agriculture. Agriculture is exempted, so anyone saying this is horrible for agriculture is simply wrong. Under the specific language of the legislation, agriculture is exempted.

The clean water rule resolves years of confusion and provides regulatory certainty for businesses, farmers, local governments, and communities. It creates no new permitting requirements and maintains all previous exemptions and exclusions.

Despite President Obama's veto, Republicans remain determined to undermine the environment. Safe water is critical to the health of our communities. One need go no further than Flint, MI, to find out that that is, in fact, the case. And it is important to our economy. At this very moment, as I have indicated, 100,000 people live in Flint, MI. All of those families—thousands of families—have been forced to worry about their children's health because of lead contamination in their drinking water. Their little brains are adversely affected by lead in the water. We have known that for a long time, but in an effort to save a buck, the Governor and others in Michigan decided they would try something else and in the process have really drastically damaged the lives of little boys and girls in Flint, MI.

Our country is the wealthiest country in the world. No American should have to worry about whether they are drinking safe water in America. It is unconscionable to think that we would waste valuable time in the Senate attacking a rule dealing with clean water designed to keep our Nation's water safe. And while we are doing this—wasting time here in the Senate today—Flint, MI, is in a state of emergency.

Republicans are so wedded to ideological purity, they have lost touch with reality. They have somehow failed to recognize that clean water is a basic priority for all Americans. The reality is that the Federal funding and reasonable protections are necessary to ensure public health and safety.

The Governor of the State of Michigan is an anti-government person. That is his mark. He especially wants Washington to stay out of Michigan's government. But what is the first thing he does when he finds out he and his whole government have messed up the State of Michigan? He calls Washington for help. He, along with many of my friends on the other side of the aisle, disparage the Federal Government every chance they get, but when a crisis strikes, whom do they call upon to help? The Federal Government.

Rolling back clean water protections is the wrong thing to do, and Republicans should refocus their energy on solutions to keep America healthy and safe.

ANNIVERSARY OF CITIZENS UNITED DECISION

Mr. REID. Mr. President, a flood of dark money has engulfed the American political system and perverted our democracy. The voices of ordinary citizens are being drowned out by billionaires seeking to rig the system in their favor.

Americans should know that Democrats are fighting to restore their voice, which is being overshadowed by the billions of dollars being spent to push the Republican Presidential nominees, and on every level of the government, this dark money is there drowning out the voices of average Americans. Over here, we stand united in our commitment to advance the interest of the middle-class and working families. It is important to remember how we got to this point.

Yesterday I saw that the junior Senator from Florida and the former Governor of Florida have spent about \$150 million so far running for President. One of them is at 10 percent in the national polls and the other is at 6 percent. But they have the money to slosh around and spend.

We got here because 6 years ago today, the Supreme Court of our great country erased a century of sound government regulations that protect the fairness and integrity of elections. It was determined during the Republican reign of Teddy Roosevelt that there

was too much corporate money in American politics, and so under his leadership, it was eliminated. But the Supreme Court changed that in a very narrow decision of 5 to 4.

The disastrous Citizens United ruling opened the floodgates for these shadowy billionaires to influence our elections. Most of the spending is done in secret by special interest shell groups who refuse to disclose their donors to the American people. These billionaire donors stop at nothing to buy a government that favors them and their special interests.

There are two brothers who I believe are determined to buy America, and we will find out come election time. Maybe they have been able to do that. Charles and David Koch are shrewd business people. Their wealth is nearly unmatched anywhere in the world. They have amassed a fortune from inherited wealth that they have magnified that has come from oil, chemicals, and a lot of different places. They originally inherited this from their dad and built it into a multinational corporation. No one really knows their net worth, but some say it is \$100 billion, \$150 billion. No one really knows. They have become two of the wealthiest men in the entire world.

They seek more wealth, but that is not all they seek. A new book by Jane Myer—a dignified and renowned author and journalist—she reports in her book that immediately after the election of President Obama, the Koch brothers wanted to double down on what they had done before. They had been working on this for a while. They didn't like this man, Barack Obama, being President of the United States, so they gathered like-minded billionaires—it is in her book—and plotted to spend however much money it would take to get rid of him for a new term and basically undermine our democracy. You can't make up a story like this. These are the facts.

Capitalizing on the Citizens United decision, the Koch brothers have poured over \$1 billion into our political system to create a country that protects the wealthiest one-half of 1 percent. The America they envision is drastically different from the vision most Americans have for our country.

I have a list of some of the things they have advocated for decades. It used to be just the fringe, but now we have people running for President who agree with him. They want to abolish Social Security, eliminate minimum wage laws, dismantle Medicare as we know it, dismantle our public education system, dismantle protections for clean air and water, create tax breaks for themselves, and they have done a pretty good job of that. They are prepared to use their enormous wealth to accomplish these goals. They really put their money where their mouth is. They spend it because they have it to spend. They have pledged to spend about \$1 billion this cycle, not counting all the money they have spent in years past.